

Transcription of Gulf Coast Heritage Tourism/Finnish interview with Tanya Howard Hamilton, Finnish Lutheran Historical Foundation.

Transcribed by Reba Brown, SRGLH LA I

Tanya: Well Finland you know is next to Russia, which they went through several wars with Russia to win their independence. Finland is a very cold country. It can get dark at night 24 hours year-round so the people that come from there tend to be very hearty people and they like to fish and the timber industry and so that fit in with those who ended up coming to South Mississippi. It looks as though they came here in the early nineteen hundreds.

I think Gideon Laine, who was the manager of the Finnish Gulf Coast Land Company, came here in 1899 and then these other two gentlemen followed in 1901. They put together this pamphlet that gave an overview of the area. The temperatures the weather the cattle that could be raised here the vegetables, fruits, whatnot, and also about the fishing and then what I really love is the little map at the back of the pamphlet that shows the Mississippi Gulf Coast and the area that they were wanting for the Fins to colonize and that was called Swartwout, Mississippi which is now called Pecan area.

I put this on one of the Finnish Facebook pages a couple of years ago and it seems like the there are other pamphlets that were similar to this but in different areas of the country so I believe they were just trying to entice the Finnish people to these different areas but majority of them settled up in Michigan, and Minnesota, and Canada, the weather that they were more used to and so many other families ended up moving back up North because of the humidity and they found out how things mildewed here (Laughs) they didn't like that so.

Well my mother's parents, their names were Koskela, and there are several Koskela's still around in the area. My dad's mother was born here but her parents came from Finland and her maiden name was Lokso. The Wachses* is another family that still here Koski's. I know, Saksa's, Maki's so there's yeah. Well I know my mother's name was Toini and I and her twin sister's name, although they call her Tiny, and Finnish it would be tuning and it's Thyne but you know so many of the Finnish names are kind of difficult for Americans to pronounce so I don't, I think they strayed away from those. (Laughs)

Well the most popular it would be the Finnish sweetbreads and the pulla which I know I'm not saying any more Finnish accent but yeah PULLA but everybody loved their Finnish sweetbreads.

Well Gideon Laine is the one who donated land for the church that that is on the- in Kreole at the time -Kreole at that point on the south side of the tracks was called Laine,

Mississippi now it's Kreole but it's a little one-room Church. The pews that are there are were handmade by the members and there is a pump organ there that's been there since 1912 and we still use it at Christmas you know when we have our Christmas carols.

This is the little charter where the church was originally chartered in 1904 and that's the Suomi-Synoodin and Suomi is the Finnish word for Finland so and my great-grandfather's name is on there, Johan Lokso, he was one of the charter members of the church.

At that time people didn't travel great distances to go to church so more of your local churches I think people attended and kind of swayed away from the Lutheran Church but this, at the time, they only had a Finnish minister that came twice a year. He would come for two weeks at a time, in the spring and in the fall, and have all the confirmations and the baptisms at that time and once a month they would meet in members' homes to have a little service you know whether they had a Finnish sermon that was mailed to them or a tape that they played, they would read scripture and they would sing songs so all of the members had these little song books that they would bring with them so it was yeah, as so it's like a Sunday-school songbook was what it was called but.

Finnish is a very difficult language but I think we all know our little phrases and words you know it we meet three times a year we have turned it into a Historical Society, the Finnish Lutheran Historical Society or Foundation of Kreole, Mississippi we did that in 1995 so we meet three times a year at the church. We have our March meeting which is like a business and membership meeting in October we have a picnic on the grounds and then the second Saturday in December we have our Christmas Silver Tea because when they did all their little meetings once a month they always called it silver tea but at Christmas which is hauskaa jouluaon a list of onnellista uutta vuotta, that's Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and we have joulupukki who is Santa he usually comes. We like luminaries and place them on the graves which is a tradition they do in Finland, usually on Christmas Eve, to remember their loved ones but you know we do that during our meetings.

There's a graveyard next to the church that's kind of a little picture with the luminaries leading up to the church and so yeah there the cemetery is really pretty when it's lit up with the luminaries at night but I know a couple of weeks ago it was so odd to see our little church pop up on one of the Facebook pages because they had been to our website and saw that so different people passing through the area they find out about the church they want to stop in and see it so you know we're always happy to do that. The Finnish Lutheran Historical Foundation of Kreole, Mississippi.

Transcribers Note:



*I cannot attest for the accuracy of the spelling of this name.

Database: 1930 United States Federal Census

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Name	Family Members	Home in 1930 (City, County, State)	Estimated Birth Year	Birthplace	Relation
<u>John</u> <u>Risberg</u>		Beat 1, Jackson, MS	abt 1879	Finland	Head
<u>Henry</u> <u>Henderson</u>	Beula Henderson	Beat 2, Jackson, MS	abt 1866	Finland	Head
<u>Lepn</u> <u>Watjus</u>	Hilma Watjus	Beat 2, Jackson, MS	abt 1877	Finland	Head
<u>Arvid</u> <u>Harada</u>	Anna Harada	Beat 2, Jackson, MS	abt 1873	Finland	Head
<u>Antti</u> <u>Ahrback</u>	Hilda Ahrback	Beat 2, Jackson, MS	abt 1876	Finland	Head
<u>John</u> <u>Williams</u>	Matilda Williams	Beat 2, Jackson, MS	abt 1884	Finland	Head
<u>Carl</u> <u>Eklund</u>	Minnie Eklund	Beat 2, Jackson, MS	abt 1893	Finland	Head
<u>Jacob S</u> <u>Pigkka</u>		Beat 3, Jackson, MS	abt 1884	Finland	Head
<u>John</u> <u>Linguist</u>		Beat 3, Jackson, MS	abt 1877	Finland	Head
<u>Maili H</u> <u>Koskela</u>	Fani A Koskela	Beat 3, Jackson, MS	abt 1883	Finland	Head
<u>Sofia</u> <u>Saksa</u>		Beat 3, Jackson, MS	abt 1876	Finland	Head
<u>Olga D</u> <u>Lackas</u>		Beat 3, Jackson, MS	abt 1872	Finland	Head
<u>Andrew H</u> <u>Maki</u>	Minnie L Maki	Beat 3, Jackson, MS	abt 1859	Finland	Head
<u>Alex T</u> <u>Randall</u>		Beat 3, Jackson, MS	abt 1867	Finland	Head
<u>Samuel</u> <u>Siverna</u>	Matilda Siverna	Beat 3, Jackson, MS	abt 1862	Finland	Head
<u>William</u> <u>Koske</u>	Hilma Koske	Beat 3, Jackson, MS	abt 1871	Finland	Head
<u>Jalmar F</u> <u>Forsman</u>	Mary Forsman	Beat 3, Jackson, MS	abt 1895	Finland	Head
<u>Victor</u> <u>Halme</u>	Louoze Halme	Beat 5, Jackson, MS	abt 1879	Finland	Head
<u>Matti</u> <u>Luoma</u>	Laura Luoma	Moss Point, Jackson, MS	abt 1857	Finland	Head
<u>Gustaf</u> <u>Johanson</u>	Ella Johanson	Moss Point, Jackson, MS	abt 1874	Finland	Head
<u>Frederick</u> <u>T Liga</u>		Pascagoula, Jackson, MS	abt 1903	Finland	
<u>Charles H</u> <u>Lehtonen</u>	Wilhemina Lehtonen	Pascagoula, Jackson, MS	abt 1857	Finland	Head

1910 Jackson County, MS Census – Birthplace Finland

Surname	Given Name	Age	Sex	Race	Birthplace	State	County	Location	Year
	<u>ALAKSA</u>	KARL	31	M	W	FINL	MS	JACKSON	3-BT
	<u>ENGBLOM</u>	ISAAC	28	M	W	FINL	MS	JACKSON	ISLANDS OFF MS COAST
	<u>FORSTMAN</u>	FRANK SR	50	M	W	FINL	MS	JACKSON	3-BT
	<u>HAARLA</u>	ARVID	38	M	W	FINL	MS	JACKSON	3-BT
	<u>HENDRICKSEN</u>	HENRY	48	M	W	FINL	MS	JACKSON	1-WD MOSS POINT
	<u>HENDRICKSEN</u>	JOHN	47	M	W	FINL	MS	JACKSON	3-BT
	<u>ISAACSON</u>	CARL	31	M	W	FINL	MS	JACKSON	3-BT
	<u>JOHNSON</u>	GUSTAF	36	M	W	FINL	MS	JACKSON	4-WD MOSS POINT
	<u>JOHNSON</u>	TOBIAS	55	M	W	FINL	MS	JACKSON	3-BT
	<u>KIVISTO</u>	JOHN	35	M	W	FINL	MS	JACKSON	3-BT
	<u>KONSTANTIN</u>	AUGUST	21	M	W	FINL	MS	JACKSON	3-BT
	<u>KOSKELA</u>	MATT	28	M	W	FINL	MS	JACKSON	3-BT
	<u>KOSKI</u>	WILLIAM	38	M	W	FINL	MS	JACKSON	3-BT
	<u>LAAKSO</u>	JOHN	46	M	W	FINL	MS	JACKSON	3-BT
	<u>LAINE</u>	KIDION	46	M	W	FINL	MS	JACKSON	3-BT
	<u>LECTON</u>	NIKOLAI	36	M	W	FINL	MS	JACKSON	3-BT
	<u>LEFTONEN</u>	JOHN	46	M	W	FINL	MS	JACKSON	3-BT